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Languages for the 21st century

Brazilian Portuguese

the guardian

6

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There are plenty of reasons why you should consider learning Portuguese the Brazilian way. Not only is Brazil the largest Portuguese-speaking country in the world and the fourth-largest democracy on the planet. Brazil also matters in the world of business: it was one of the last countries to go into recession in 2008, and among the first to resume growth in 2009. This booklet will give you all the essential vocabulary for your first trip. You can listen to audio versions of all the conversations at guardian.co.uk/21stclanguages

The series concludes tomorrow with **Latin American Spanish**

A bigger splash

Brazil's cultural climate has bred Portuguese into a language that has warmth, creativity and an endearing fondness for embellishment



Alex Bellos was the Guardian's Rio correspondent from 1998-2003. He is the author of *Futebol: The Brazilian Way of Life*

America is often blamed for the deterioration of the English language.

Such a claim is never levelled at its Latin American neighbours Brazil, which has only improved its mother tongue, Portuguese.

First, there is how it sounds. Brazil gave the world bossa nova, a lilting, sensual musical style that could only have been invented in a language

as correspondingly lilting and sensual. The consonants are all softened, to sound like waves crashing on the beach; the intonation is syncopated and seductive. Brazilian Portuguese has been described as sounding like "Sean Connery speaking Italian"; this is true, but only when he is wearing swimming trunks.

Brazilian culture reshaped Portuguese in its own image, introducing an informality, warmth and inclusiveness that I am not aware exists in any other major language. Everyone is known by their first names, even the president. Actually, he is known by his nickname, Lula. As are many other Brazilians,



Making waves at Rio's Copacabana beach

like Pelé, Robinho and Kaká, too. Speaking Portuguese makes you feel instantly among friends.

Brazil is one of the world's great melting pots, consisting mainly of Europeans, Africans and indigenous Indians, as well as a fair amount of Japanese.

Brazilian Portuguese isn't fussy about taking words from other languages and making them its own. It's a very international,

non-judgemental tongue. Yet no attempt is made to pronounce foreign words correctly; the local rules for softening consonants always applies. So "rush hour"

Brazilian Portuguese has been described as sounding like 'Sean Connery speaking Italian'

is *hora do rush*, pronounced "hush", which I think is particularly appropriate, and the word for billboard is "outdoor", pronounced *ouch-door*.

At first Portuguese seems difficult, but this is almost entirely because of the unexpected pronunciation and intonation. Yet there are very clear rules and once these are mastered the language is no harder to learn than Spanish or French. True, the grammar and spelling is more complicated than French or Spanish

(newspapers have columns on grammar every week, and new spelling rules were announced last year), but most people make lots of mistakes and it doesn't matter. What I loved about learning Brazilian Portuguese is that the spoken language is more fundamental than the written language, partly since a large number of people are effectively illiterate, and, as such, is tailored to oral communication and old-fashioned story-telling. (If something is written down, this does not make it more true or reliable, as we tend to think in Europe). What is true and what is not true is very fluid.

But my favourite aspect of Brazilian Portuguese, and an important breakthrough in becoming fluent, was to grasp the fundamental role of the suffixes *-inho*, and *-ão*, meaning 'little' and 'big'. Never knowingly underuse one of these suffixes.

A true Brazilian will find it difficult to say a sentence without incorporating the suffixes '*-inho*' and '*-ão*'

The diminutive *-inho* can also indicate love, intimacy, beauty, irrelevance and affection and the augmentative *-ão* can indicate fear, ugliness or wonder. A true Brazilian will find it difficult to say a sentence without incorporating an *-inho* or an *-ão*, which means that conversations tend to be full of passion and exaggeration, humour and colour. The country is a land of extremes in so many ways (in terms of geography and wealth, for instance) – and the language encourages its inhabitants to talk in extremes.

Rather than requiring an extensive vocabulary, Brazilian Portuguese is richly idiomatic and also versatile because of the creativity it allows. After all, this is the language whose greatest contribution to international vernacular is the exclamation: "ooooooooooooooooaaaaaah."

How Portuguese works

Portuguese is not a difficult language to learn, especially if you have had some experience of another Latin-based or Romance language, such as French, Spanish or Italian.

If you have no knowledge of a Latin-based language, or in fact, of any language, take heart – you are setting out with a clean slate and with no preconceptions which could mislead you. Many Brazilian Portuguese words are also very similar to English, and spotting the links will give you the confidence and desire to keep up your learning. The American influence on Brazil has resulted in various English words entering the Brazilian speaker's vocabulary.

The Portuguese of Brazil is different from that of continental Portugal in three main ways:

vocabulary, grammatical structures, and, most importantly, pronunciation. (Pronunciation is in fact the main area you will need to concentrate on. Many people erroneously believe that, as it looks like Spanish, it will sound that way too.) You could consider the two variants of the language in the same way as American and British English. It is widely considered that Brazilian

Portuguese is actually easier to understand than European, as the Portuguese speak very quickly, with their mouths closed very much around the words, and they often "eat" the beginning and ending of words.

Brazilians, on the other hand, speak with a much more open mouth, making it easier to hear vowels. They do not appear to speak quite as fast as their European counterparts, but they do have some different sounds. Despite the fact that the Portuguese of Brazil may sound very different to that spoken in Portugal, the recent spelling agreement (the new *Acordo Ortográfico*) between all the Portuguese-speaking countries means that wherever you travel in the Lusophone world, there exists a general consistency in how words are written. Each region will still maintain its own quirks of expression and vocabulary, in the same way as the English-speaking world. However, whether you use European Portuguese in Brazil, Brazilian Portuguese in Africa, or African Portuguese in the Azores, apart from a few queries on words and expressions, you will be understood.

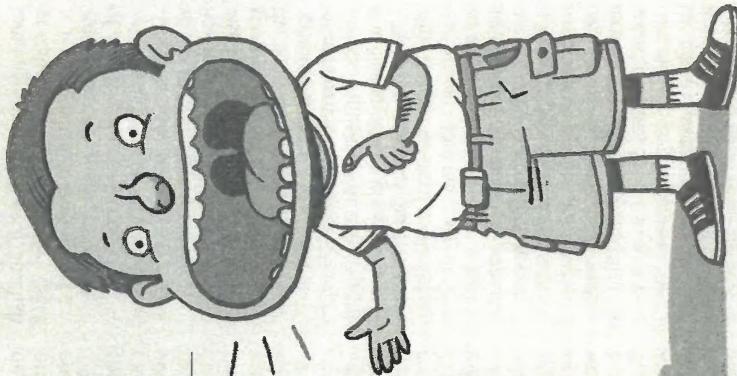
In native Portuguese there is no **k**, **w**, or **y**, although they appear in imported words, and under the recent spelling reform have become official letters of the Portuguese alphabet. Pronunciation in Brazil varies from region to region, as it may do in any country. There are certain distinct sounds in Rio which mark the speaker as a Carioca (a native of Rio), eg the **de** sound at the end of a word pronounced as 'gee'.

PORTUGUESE VOWELS

Portuguese vowel sounds are tricky to imitate, as there are nasal sounds, and sounds differ depending on where the vowel is in any given word. However, Brazilians do open their mouths wider than the Portuguese, and are therefore theoretically easier to understand. Here is a general idea:

- a** as in 'rather', eg *falar*,
or as in 'abide', eg *mesa*
ã as in 'rang', eg *irmão*.
This is a nasal sound.
e as in 'bell', eg *certo*, or as
in 'madden', eg *pesar*

- i** as in 'mean', eg *partida*,
or as in 'cigar', eg *emigrar*
o as in 'saw', eg *nova*, or
as in 'boot', eg *sapato*
u as in 'boot', eg *durmo*,
or as in 'bull', eg *mudar*



PORTUGUESE CONSONANTS
Portuguese consonants also differ from the English sounds in different situations. Follow the table below:

b	as in 'ball', eg <i>bonito</i>
c+e/i, ç	as in 'sat', eg <i>cem</i> , <i>começa</i>
c+a/o/u	as in 'can', eg <i>comer</i>
ch	as in 'shout', eg <i>chocolate</i>
d	as in 'dab', eg <i>dar</i> , or like the <i>g</i> in 'gym', eg <i>cidade</i>
f	as in 'fun', eg <i>falar</i>
g+e/i	like the 's' in 'pleasure', eg <i>geleia</i>
g+a/o/u	as in 'got', eg <i>pagar</i>
h	is silent, eg <i>hotel</i>
j	as in 'pleasure', eg <i>julho</i>
l	as in 'last', eg <i>livre</i> ; when at the end of a word, sounds like 'wl', eg <i>Brasil</i> like the 'li' in 'billion', eg <i>mulher</i>
lh	as in 'map', eg <i>mesa</i>
m	as in 'nod', eg <i>nadar</i>
n	like the 'ni' in 'onion', eg <i>vinho</i>
nh	

p	as in 'pin', eg <i>parar</i>
q(u)	as in 'quart', eg <i>quando</i>
q(u)+e/i	is pronounced as a silent 'u', eg <i>queijo</i> (<i>'kay-zhoo'</i>)
r (initial)	is aspirated and sounds a little bit like a hard 'h', eg <i>Rio</i> (<i>'hee-o'</i>)
r	as in 'ran', eg <i>compram</i>
s	as in 'sat', eg <i>sol</i>
s+vowels	as in 'zoo', eg <i>casa</i>
t	as in 'tap', eg <i>todo</i>
v	is pronounced as in English, eg <i>vida</i>
x	as in 'shout', eg <i>baixa</i>
z	as in 'zoo', eg <i>fazer</i>

THE STRESS RULES

In basic terms, Portuguese words are stressed (ie emphasised when spoken) on the last syllable if they end in **i**, **u**, groups of two vowels (diphthongs), consonants and nasal vowels, eg *papel*, *irmão*.

They are stressed on the syllable before last if they are verbs ending in **am** or **em**, or words ending in **a**, **e**, **o**, **em**, eg *mesa*, *falam*. This is the most common default stress in Portuguese words.

If a word breaks either of these rules, a written accent is added to show where the stress falls. So if you see a word with a written accent, you must stress the syllable where the accent is placed.

Bom dia. Seu passaporte, por favor.
Hello. Your passport, please.

Aqui está.
Here it is.

Você é inglesa, não é?
You're English, is that right?

Sim, sou.
Yes, I am.

Muito bem. Quanto tempo vai passar aqui?
Very well. How much time are you going to spend here?

Seis meses.
Six months.

Está bem. Obrigado. Tchau.
OK. Thank you. Bye.

Bom dia, obrigada.
Goodbye, thank you.

Greetings and goodbyes

oi hi/hello
bom dia hello/good morning/
goodbye
boa tarde hello/good afternoon/
goodbye
boa noite hello/good evening/
goodnight
muito prazer pleased to meet you
igualmente likewise

Common phrases

está bem OK
muito bem very well
bom right then (good)
vamos shall we/let's
sentar to sit down
seu your
você you
por favor please
um momento just a second
aqui, cá here

Nationalities

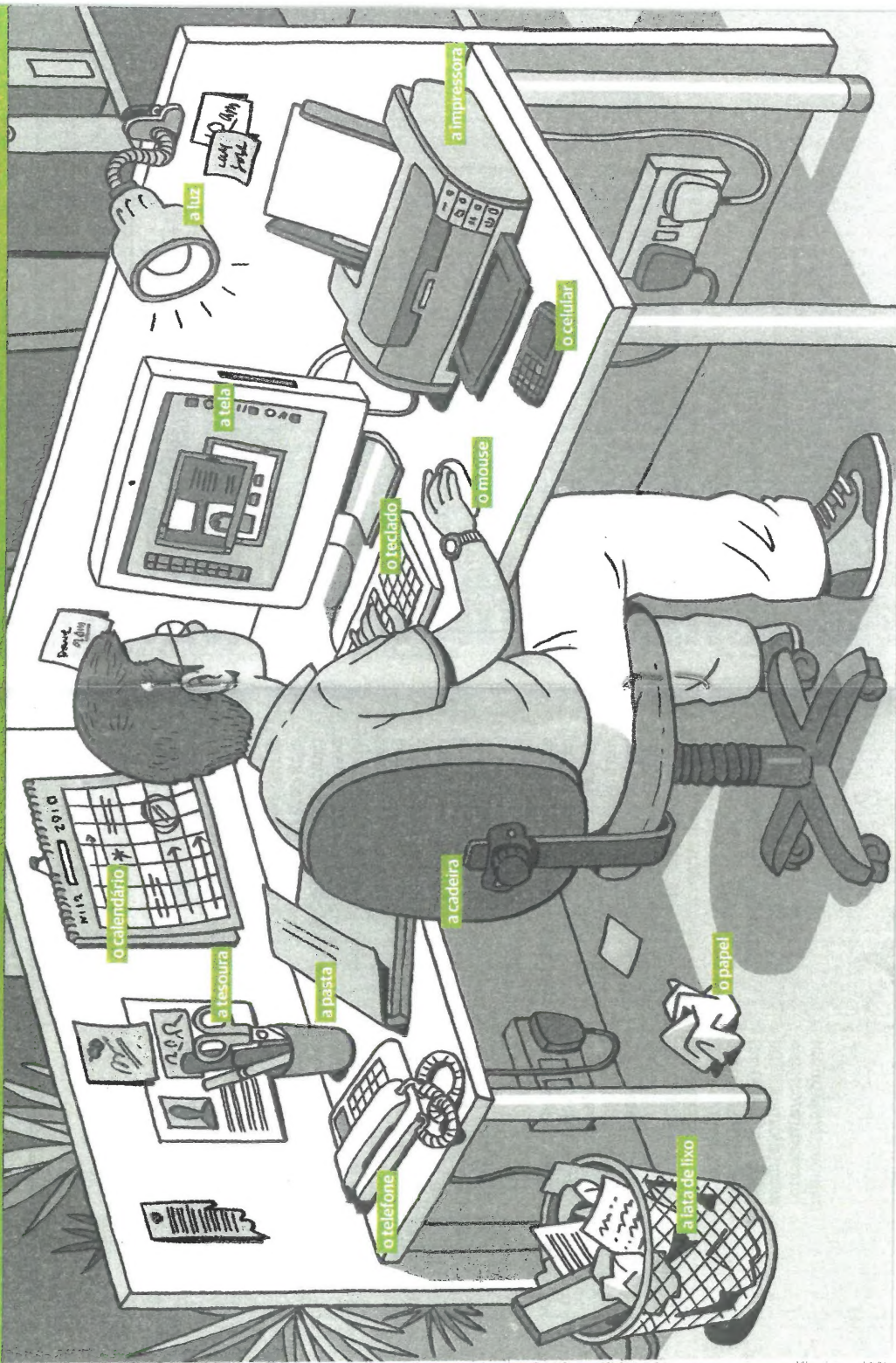
eu sou brasileiro/a I am Brazilian
(male/female)
português/portuguesa
Portuguese
inglês/inglesa English
americano/a American
espanhol/a Spanish
argentino/a Argentinian
alemão/alemã German
grego/a Greek
escocês/escocesa Scottish
irlandês/irlandesa Irish
chinês/chinesa Chinese
italiano/a Italian

Professions

eu sou professor/a I am a teacher
engenheiro/a engineer
dentista dentist
motorista driver
estudante student
médico/a doctor
advogado/a lawyer
repcionista receptionist
gerente manager
secretário/a secretary
jornalista journalist
enfermeiro/a nurse
músico/a musician
arquiteto/a architect

bem-vindo/a a São Paulo
welcome to Sao Paulo
tudo bem? how are things?/
everything OK?
como está? how are you?
tudo bem fine/OK
bem obrigado/a well, thanks
(m/f)
tchau see you/bye

está (it) is/are
é is/are
não no, not
sim yes
sou I am
obrigado/a thank you (m/f)
muito obrigado/a thanks very
much (male/female)
de nada don't mention it
não é? isn't it/is that so?



Tem uma mesa livre?
Do you have a table free?

São quantos?
How many are you?

Somos só dois.
There are just two of us.

Temos esta mesa aqui perto da porta, ou aquela ali ao fundo.
We have this table here near the door, or that one there at the back.

Esta está bem. Traga o cardápio por favor.
This is fine. Bring the menu please.

Tome.
Here you are.

Booking a table

mesa table
livre free
cheio full

Ordering food

traga o cardápio, por favor please bring the menu

tome here you are/take o que há/tem? what is there/do you have?

que sabores? what flavours?

há/tem ... there is ...

típico/a daqui typical of here

deixe ver let (me) see

já escolheram? have you (pl.)

chosen yet?

que vai pedir/comer? what are

Types of dish

entradas starters

prato principal main meal

guarnições side dishes

sobremesas desserts

canja chicken broth

lula frita fried squid

camarão prawns

sopas/sopa quentinha soups/

hot soup

massa pasta

galinha/frango chicken

lombo assado roast pork loin

filé de peixe frito fried fish fillet

Paying the bill

a conta, por favor the bill please

conta bill

a próxima vez next time

são quantos? how many of you are there?
somos ... there are ... of us

you going to ask for/eat?
tenho fome/sede I'm hungry/thirsty

não tenho muita fome I'm not very hungry

para começar to start with

é isto para mim I'll have this

e depois and then

para beber to drink

pode trazer can you bring

pode trazer mais .../outro/a ...

can you bring more .../ another ...

espeto misto mixed kebab

bife na brasa barbecued steak

feijoada black bean stew

picanha steak

saladas/salada mista salads/

mixed salad

legumes vegetables

couve à mineira sauté greens

pão bread

batatas fritas chips

arroz rice

arroz e feijão rice and black

beans

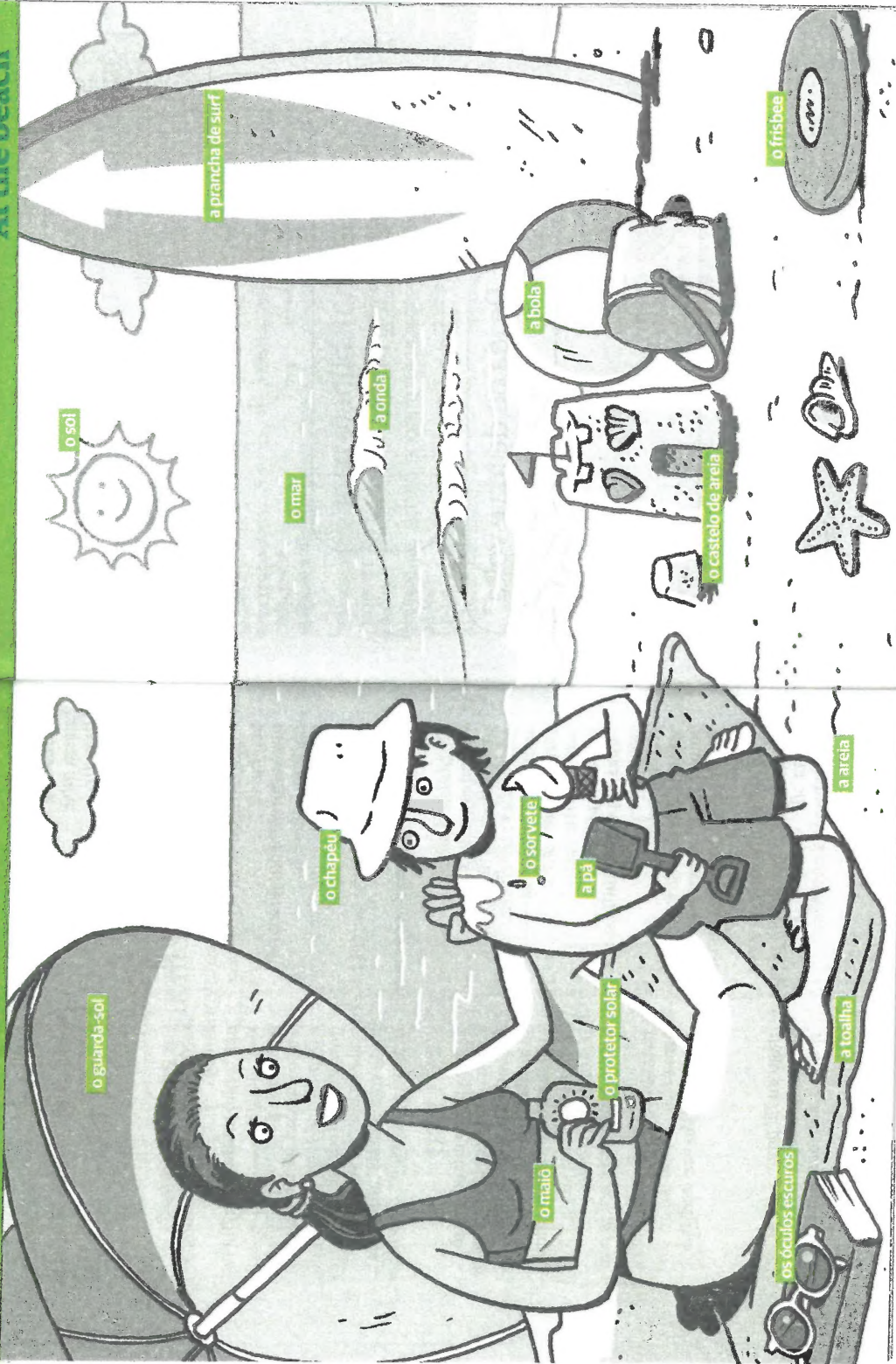
pago eu I'll pay

foi um (jantar) delicioso

it was a delicious (dinner)

At the beach

At the beach



A que horas parte o próximo ônibus de luxo para Salvador?

What time does the next coach for Salvador depart?

Parte às dez e quinze.

It departs at ten fifteen.

Querida um bilhete para este, se faz favor.

I would like a ticket for this one, please.

De ida ou de ida e volta?

Single or return?

Só de ida.

Just a single.

Muito bem. Agora, são 68 reais.

Very well. Right then, it's 68 reais.

Buying a ticket

como vai a ...? how do you get to ...?

pode me levar a ...? can you take me to ...?

a que horas parte ...? what time does ... depart?

sai de onde? where does it leave from?

quanto é? how much is it?

tem troco para ...? do you have change for ...?

estação rodoviária bus station

Types of transport

carro car

táxi taxi

ônibus bus

pé foot

bicicleta bicycle

ônibus (de luxo) coach

Numbers

zero zero

um, uma one

dois, duas two

três three

quatro four

cinco five

seis six

sete seven

oito eight

nove nine

dez ten

onze eleven

doze twelve

treze thirteen

catorze (quatorze) fourteen

o próximo ônibus the next bus
o portão número quinze gate
no 15

às dez e quinze at 10:15

às treze e trinta e seis at 13:36

às vinte e duas e quarenta e

cinco at 22:45

bilheteria ticket office

bilhete ticket

queria um bilhete I would like a
ticket

de ida/de ida e volta single/return

metrô underground/metro

motocicleta motorbike

avião aeroplane

trem train

barco boat

pego uma carona I get a lift

quinze fifteen

dezesesseis sixteen

dezessete seventeen

dezoito eighteen

dezenove nineteen

vinte twenty

trinta thirty

quarenta forty

cinquenta fifty

sessenta sixty

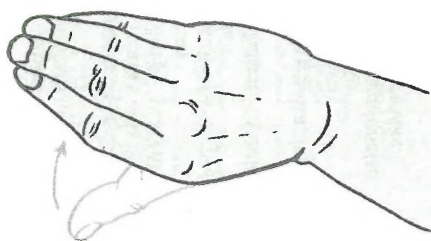
setenta seventy

oitenta eighty

noventa ninety

cem (cento) one hundred

cento e um one hundred and one



"Cheio"
"Full"

How to do it: show the back of your hand, with the fingers pointing up, and close the thumb against the fingers repeatedly. Might be used when approaching an *estacionamento* (car park) to warn you there are no spaces, or by a Brazilian friend if the nightclub you want to enter is packed.

"Não me importa"
"I don't care"

How to do it: hit the back of your fingers against the fingers on the other hand. Repeat several times, also using other hand. Used frequently to express general lack of interest or knowledge.



"Papo-furado"
"Not true"/"Idle chat"

How to do it: palm facing down, tap right under your jaw, with the back of your hand.

"Bem"
"Good"

How to do it: hand in a fist, with outstretched thumb pointing upwards. Though recognised across the globe, the thumbs-up gesture is particularly omnipresent in Brazil.



YOU, ME AND EVERYONE ELSE

Singular: eu I, ele he, ela she
você/tu you

Plural: nós we, eles they (male or group of male and female), elas they (female) vocês you (pl)

Note: In Brazil most people call each other *você* which means "you". The use of *tu* in Brazil is very limited and occurs only in certain areas, mostly in southern Brazil, depending on how formal the situation is and to whom one is speaking.

TO BE (ESTAR)

eu estou I am, **ele/ela** está he/she/it is, **você** está you are, **nós** estamos we are, **eles/elas** estão they are, **vocês** estão you (pl) are

TO BE (SER)

eu sou I am, **ele/ela** é he/she is, **você** é you are, **nós** somos we are, **eles/elas** são they are, **vocês** são you (pl) are

Note: In Portuguese there are two verbs for the English verb "to be". There are various rules but the general rule is to use *ser* when you are referring to a characteristic of an object or person that is permanent or fixed eg 'I am English' is *eu sou inglês/esa*. *Estar* is used when describing a situation or characteristic that can change eg 'I am in the hotel' is *estou no hotel* as one's location can change.

TO HAVE (TER)

tenho I have, **tem** he/she/it has, **tem** you have, **temos** we have, **têm** they have, **têm** you (pl) have

TO GO (IR)

vou I go, **vai** he/she/it goes, **vai** you go, **vamos** we go, **vão** they go, **vão** you (pl) go

TO WANT (QUERER)

quero I want, **quer** he/she/it wants, **quer** you want, **queremos** we want, **querem** they want, **querem** you (pl) want

WORD GLUE

sim yes
não no

por favor please

obrigado/obrigada thank you

(men use the former and women the latter in all situations)

e and

ou or

com with

sem without

mas but

para for

por quê?/porque why?/because

(o) quê? what?

qual? which?

quando? when

onde? where

como? how

mais more

menos less

demais too much